

I DON'T THINK THEY'RE DRAWN BY MY REPUTATION AS  
A LEADING MALE FEMINIST

i noticed the other night that,  
out of a literature class of twenty-one,  
i only have three male students.  
maybe this is the result of some demographic accident  
of which i am unaware,  
but i suspect it has something to do  
with feminist criticism, with literature  
becoming once again the domain of  
the militant, the romantic, and the effete,  
as was its condition to a great extent  
when hemingway found it  
and from which he rescued it.  
and as much as i love my women students,  
and look forward with joy to teaching them  
for many years to come,  
one of the things i liked best  
about public education over the years  
was that it was not the exclusive club  
of one sex or the other.

OLD MEN TALK TO WAITRESSES

i never used to flirt with waitresses.  
i never used to flirt with anybody.  
i used to hit on women,  
but when i did i meant it  
and when i didn't i didn't.  
i was always kind of embarrassed by  
the way older men would kid around with  
waitresses in the corniest of manners, often  
in front of their wives, their families.  
i didn't blame their wives  
if they became a trifle nonplussed,  
although most of them seemed able  
to shine it on graciously  
in the same good spirit  
with which the waitresses generally  
accepted it.

no, as a young man i was fucking  
waitresses, not flirting with them.

now it's been a while  
since i slept with a waitress  
and it begins to dawn on me  
that the ones i might be interested  
in sleeping with, just might find  
the notion ludicrous.



so i've begun — slowly, because  
i'm only learning how —  
to flirt with them.

#### BUT IRISH, ALSO

i read in andrea lee's review  
of i, fellini in the new yorker:

" ... the concerns behind his art were profoundly italian: the contrast between the morality preached by the catholic church and the pleasures of the flesh, linked, if only imaginatively, to a pagan past: the profound nostalgia for a recently vanished way of life; the obsessive desire for and fear of women, who are characterized with precision as either whores or good wives: the search for individual honor in a world of compromise and equivocation."

for years i've quipped to gene dinielli  
that i've always wanted to be an italian.  
suddenly i discover that  
i always was.

#### ON A WING AND A PRAYER

never fly the american beagle unless you desire  
the thrill of true flight.  
the aircraft has a capacity of twenty passengers.  
every seat is a window seat and every seat  
is an aisle seat. almost on your hands  
and knees, as if in a submarine, you squeeze  
your way up what calls itself an aisle. you  
do not carry your carry-on luggage on the  
plane — you leave it at the boarding ladder  
and someone stuffs it in a hollow in the  
side of the fusilage. there are no restrooms  
and no flight attendants, so of course there  
are no cocktails, although alcohol has never  
been more desperately needed. a recording  
tells you where the safety gear is stored,  
and it may be the first time you have ever  
paid attention, but you can't hear them  
out because the turbo props have begun  
warming up. all the passengers are laughing,  
but it is the laughter of a theatre audience  
premiering dr. strangelove. above stockton the